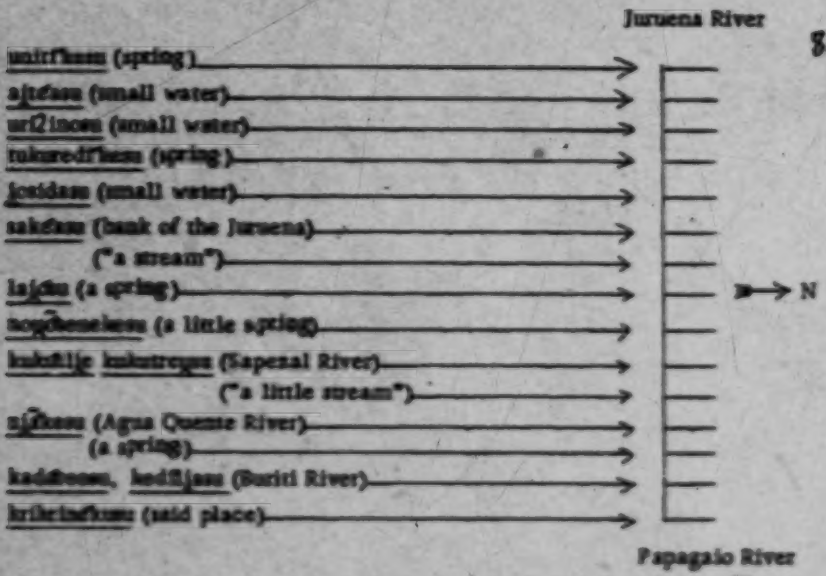
1:Lévi-Strauss--137 E-5 (1938-1939)1948 SP17 Nambicuara SP17



TRADITION

The Nambikwara have a sharp sense of tradition. We have read [73
above (p. 50) a remark of 81 which shows him to be sadly cognizant of the decline of his race. Customs and techniques are generally considered as [[83
legacies of the "ancestors": 129]

58. iotiuou ikitage gʔtige.
"The ancestors taught us how to coil it [the ribbon of rubber meant for making a ball]" (b1).

One single legend was found relating to the origin of the universe. [120] 773
It is that of the Flood, the children' version of which we have already 539
given. (1) Here is the text used by adults:

1. See above, p. 69.

58. nartõue kẽʔõire
narukõtõire naukarẽʔõue
nahõtende kõnõ-rage naukõdo uʔẽre toãdige
the water had descended the water flooded everyone to die

773 dẽinhe nẽ̃kena kanayapẽ̃ndige
539 only an old woman escaped one day (?)
nẽ̃ndige ẽ̃ideende kẽninde
to cry [she climbs on a buriti palm] buriti coco
iotẽ̃tige tanẽ̃amdage iẽ̃ũ iẽ̃ũ iẽ̃ũ
she throws [in the water] to wait to wait to wait [the water]
dehẽ̃ndige untahẽ̃tige nihunĩ̃ndige tarahĩ̃narige gĩ̃ttɛ
to dry to sleep the morning to be born to deliver child
taiĩ̃ttige totha̋ndige ikã̃totẽ̃ndige ikã̃ iõndige
to fall [from the stomach] to grow very quickly
to grow very quickly to grow
ndaygɛ tamĩ̃ndige bã̃dige tẽ̃aygu
[with its] mother to copulate two twins to be born
nĩ̃ndage ẽintaliĩ̃kero
of the marriage [and] having fallen again
ioni dẽinhaiɛnẽ̃nkero
of a man and woman married again
gẽinaroẽ̃nkero tẽ̃taliĩ̃kero nĩiin
of a child large again who falls again the brothers
kĩ̃ẽ̃nkero deinia gĩ̃ina
to marry again another village
tamindẽkero bã̃ẽ̃ɛnaa
[having made] having copulated again two twins
dɛnẽ̃kero dẽiaynĩ̃ĩ̃kero ainindẽkero
again being born to make another village again to
inhabit again
gẽheni nẽhakero bã̃ẽ̃ininukero nĩidnia
to make children again two children to make again the brothers
nẽ̃nẽ̃ĩkero ẽ̃inikɛ tẽ̃nẽ̃nu tẽ̃nẽ̃nu
to marry again other men to beget to beget
dẽinidia gĩ̃ina iẽ̃hoɛ tamĩ̃nẽ̃ayɛ tamin[illegible]tige
another village to build to beget to beget
ẽ̃idige dẽinẽ̃kero ninẽ̃kero
to make love to have children again another village again
ainẽ̃ẽ̃idige ainẽ̃ẽ̃kero deidiaygi gĩ̃ina
going away going away again other villages
[131] hẽ̃inẽ̃kero hẽ̃ã̃ nirigandi" aiã̃ã̃ hẽ̃nẽ̃iarã̃ã̃
others still far away to inhabit (?) all distant very distant
nĩ̃ẽ̃tindẽ̃ti ã̃ĩ̃naiẽ̃ddẽiani nigẽhẽ̃tiã̃
very distant to inhabit who do not know how to speak
others distant (?)

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nãgatatnãjãni ukuhajonetãtjena ukuajenthni
who do not know how to understand others who live so distant
[that it is necessary]
kanẽhgore kanẽhgore kanẽhgore
that a moon end that a moon end that a moon end
natiĩtnãjãni (b1)
in order that they arrive.

The whole story can be summed up as follows: alone of all the 773 humans, one old woman succeeded in escaping the Flood by hanging to the top of a buriti palm. By letting some nuts fall from the palm into the water, she was able to measure the decline of the water, and when the ground was dry, she came down and was delivered of a son. Through an incestuous union with her son, she then gave birth to twins of different sex, and from their incestuous union was born a new generation of twins. Thus, the whole of humanity would be descended from a series of marriages between twins, each giving birth to a new couple. As men multiplied, new villages were founded, always further away. So much so that today men live at such distances from one another that they do not speak the same language, do not understand one another, and must travel for whole months in order to visit.

This version offers several points in common with others collected in distant regions of South America. It is doubtless necessary to interpret the throwing of the palm nuts in the light of the "magical projection" 773 which has been studied above. (1) The throwing of small nuts certainly 171

1. Cf. p. 96.

possesses a magic significance. The same episode is found in several versions of the legend of the Flood, (2) and its magical value is formally attested

2. Cf. for example the Tupi version collected by Thevet, cited by Métraux, loc. cit., p. 45.

for the Sipaia by Nimuendaju. (3) In older versions, the old woman (since

3. To kill the sun by throwing upon it small nuts of the palm tree anaja, thus introducing night upon the earth ("Sagen der Tembe Indianer" Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Vol. 47, 1915, p. 296).

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While they speak of the latter with the excitement, and the almost exalted tone, of discovery. Let us listen to an informant (B1) describe the double cycle of the year:

First the sedentary life:

67. nedɔ:ntãtage kanaaday hãlodige nedɔntãkero, natiirikero 221 539 157 182
Tomorrow go hunting come back again
nakɨrikero dãkero wɔdãkero
cook again go to bed again sleep again
najɔgikero ajreldãkero ajɨɔnkero
day again go to the field again cultivate the field again
ajɔgɔnkero ãamkɨɔro nunãkero ninindãkero
cultivate again leave again eat again
nangikero danunkero tadrige tãɨ tãɨ tãɨ
another day cut wood cut cut cut
telunãkero [teldãdige] mbãti mbãti mbãti
finish again wait wait wait
sordãkero ãtɨnunãtage [ãtɨnãkero] ikɨnutjɛt
burn again the cold comes [still the cold] plants
denãkero nayãarãnunkero naanindãkero
to go again looking for some return again
idãkero kakɨgãdatge [kakɨgãde] hãkɨrage kãkero
plant much dig again
ikɨranukãdige ikɨnurãkero
in order to plant dig plants cut again
teldãdãnkero dɛjnerãnapãnkero agrhãkero
finish again live a long time again pull up the roots
ɛnãr ɛnãrã ɛnã?r hãnkero
[illegible] finish again
niakɨrahãnkero nɨgãgiakɨrahãrãkero ãlakero hãkero
gãtay hãkɨninani (b1)
a new field again plant again

And now the great adventure of the nomadic period:

68. inkɨnãhaje nãkɨnee ɨrige
We leave at dawn; [the basket] is made it waits.
[128] ãgerage tantrige tya tɨikinãkero rãaro
one packs; one fills the basket in the woods one travels one travels
nahoreda ãaro niajãkero morarãkero ãjakero
one comes to the water one crosses the water one crosses on the way
ãjakero alorekiãrãkero alorairãkero
on the way! one takes the prairie one crosses the prairie

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aitugainĩ'kɔro (in) ĩ'thun lomãnĩ'nkɔro ɔ̃ĩkɔro
in the forest one travels again the hill one goes down travel
ɔ̃ĩkɔro ɔ̃ĩkɔro ajitigɔmãnĩ'nkɔro mãgalanĩ'nkero
travel travel the hill one goes up the hill one crosses
kɔlakɔlatinĩ'nkɔro erĩ'lorãnĩ'nkɔro ɔ̃ĩkɔro
at the crest one travels one goes down another hill, more walking!
ĩ'likin(a)tintũherige hajtlikɔro ĩ'likitakãlikɔro
In the wet sand travel in the wet sand travel
hejalikɔro herhanĩnĩnkɔro nungenĩ'nkero
one passes the hut of other people traveling meets others
pelikãtunde ĩ'tãlĩ'ne (b1)
one is united with others here are the huts.

As is seen, the two forms of existence not are only very strikingly opposed from the economic and sociological point of view. They constitute two poles around which accumulate complex ensembles of emotions, sentiments and memories. With the same tenderness with which they 157 192 caress their wives, the men evoke the type of life defined by the temporary shelter and the eternal basket, where the most incongruous means of subsistence are sparingly scraped, gathered together, caught each day, where one lives cruelly exposed to wind, cold and rain, and which leaves no more lasting trace than the souls of the women, dispersed by the wind and storms, on whose activity it essentially reposes. And almost like the reign of need is opposed to that of liberty, they conceive in a completely different aspect the sedentary life (whose specific and ancient character is still borne witness to the original species which they cultivate), but upon which the unchangeable chain of agricultural operations confers the same character of perpetuity as the reincarnated masculine souls, the durable home of winter time, and the cultivable land which will begin to live and to produce "when the death of its preceding cultivator shall be forgotten." (1) We do not think it possible to draw conclusions, from a work

1. Cf. quotation, p. 112.

having to do exclusively with several sociological and psychological aspects of the life of the Nambikwara, relative to the place one should assign them in the ensemble of South-American cultures. However, the preceding information suffices to show under what form the problem is posed. We are in [139] the presence of a culture which shows linguistic affinities with the Tupi, and which approaches the Tupi from the double point of view of family organization and religious beliefs, at the same time recalling